

Without reform, this process will drag on, triggering the bankruptcy of yet more firms, many of which have only tenuous asbestos connections, because the main firms responsible have already gone under. Meanwhile, many who are ill from asbestos-related diseases won't be able to get timely compensation or, in some cases, any compensation. Unless the bill passes, Navy veterans, for example, will go uncompensated for diseases caused by asbestos on ships. Veterans are not allowed to sue the government, and many of the shipbuilders are long since bankrupt.

The bill will be debated and amended, and it may face a second attempted filibuster before it gets a vote. Some amendment may be reasonable at the margins, but the bill's central idea—to replace litigation with a \$140 billion compensation fund to be financed by defendant companies and their insurers—must be preserved. Democrats complain that the fund won't have enough money to compensate asbestos victims; Republicans complain that the fund will have too much money, the raising of which will constitute a burden on small and medium-size firms. The fact that the bill is being attacked from both directions suggests that its authors, Sens. Arlen Specter (R-Pa.) and Patrick J. Leahy (D-Vt.), have balanced competing interests in a reasonable manner.

Unfortunately, the bill's critics are not always so reasonable. Sen. Harry M. Reid of Nevada, the Democratic minority leader, has complained, "One would have to search long and hard to find a bill in my opinion as bad as this." He has even described the legislation as the work of lobbyists hired by corporations to limit asbestos exposure. But the truth is that the bill's main opponents are trial lawyers, who profit mightily from asbestos lawsuits and who constitute a powerful lobby in their own right. Mr. Specter and Mr. Leahy are in fact model resisters of special interests who have spent more than two years crafting legislation that serves the public interest. For Mr. Reid to demean this effort in order to fire off campaign sound bites is reprehensible.

Mr. SESSIONS. Mr. President, I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. SUNUNU). The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. FRIST. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be dispensed with.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. FRIST. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that there be a period of morning business with Senators permitted to speak up to 10 minutes each.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

BLACK HISTORY MONTH

Mr. AKAKA. Mr. President, it was 80 years ago when we first recognized February as Black History Month. Today, I am pleased to rise to add my voice to those honoring African Americans.

African Americans have both a tragic and vibrant history in the United States. This month is an opportunity to reflect upon their struggles, perse-

verance, and triumphs. African Americans have contributed to every segment of our community, ranging from politics and sports to medicine and business—and have greatly impacted the music industry. Our society continues to benefit from their service as national leaders, role models, athletes, scholars, and much more.

As you know, we cannot reflect on the achievements of our friends without remembering the civil rights movement. I vividly remember the movement's powerful call for nonviolent change. In 1963, my brother, Rev. Abraham Akaka, joined Dr. King for the famous March on Washington to help show Hawaii's support for the movement. Since 1926, Americans have dedicated the month to honoring the African American legacy. As a staunch supporter of civil rights, I am proud of the many ways that our country has evolved into a more fair and just nation since the movement.

Earlier this week, we bid a fond farewell to Coretta Scott King, who, along with her husband Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., carried the torch against discrimination and bigotry everywhere. As a nation, we are indebted to the Kings and their life's work, and the work of countless other civil rights leaders. However, it is an unfortunate reality that, despite all of this progress, inequities remain. To properly pay tribute to their legacy, I believe that it is important that we use this month not just as a time for reflection, but also as a springboard for action.

In looking back at the progress of African Americans throughout the years and how it has changed the face of our Nation, it is clear that Black history is American history. As a nation, we must work together to close the gap on these important issues. Where possible, we must work in our communities on a local level, to ensure that all members of our society have equal opportunities to thrive and succeed.

This is also a national problem that requires a refocusing of national legislative priorities. Earlier this week, President Bush released his budget for fiscal year 2007, and I was disappointed that he did not devote the proper resources to these fundamental issues. President Bush's budget once again underfunds important health care and education priorities. It saddens me that so many people will be negatively affected by the President's proposals. Unfortunately, the administration has again demonstrated a disregard for domestic programs to improve the lives of working people at the expense of tax cuts for the wealthiest.

The administration needs to refocus its priorities. There are a variety of legislative initiatives that have been introduced this Congress which will address the shortcomings in education and health care for minorities, including African Americans. Earlier this year, I introduced S. 1580—the Healthcare Equality and Account-

ability Act—which establishes programs designed to improve the quality of and access to health care for minorities, while also improving health workforce accountability. My bill also includes a comprehensive diabetes education program. Diabetes is a disease that disproportionately impacts African Americans and other minorities such as native Hawaiians.

As a former teacher, I have seen the ways that education can open doors for people from all walks of life. For that reason, I also introduced S. 1521, the Teacher Acculturation Act of 2005. This bill recognizes that cultural incongruence along racial, socioeconomic, and ethnic vectors impedes learning in our classrooms. Too often, this makes it difficult for knowledge that needs to be transmitted between students aiming to learn and teachers seeking to teach. My bill helps teachers implement strategies to create a healthy learning environment for all students.

I am hopeful that my colleagues will join me in support of my bills, which address significant gaps in services for minorities and African Americans. I am proud to stand with my Democratic colleagues in working to support and empower African Americans in addressing important issues like education, health care, and the economy. As we move through the month of February, I am hopeful that we can work together to make America a better place for all Americans.

MAKE GUN VIOLENCE PREVENTION A PRIORITY

Mr. LEVIN. Mr. President, last month was declared "Guns Aside Month" by the DC City Council in honor of the grassroots campaign known by the same name. The Guns Aside campaign is run by a DC community organization named Reaching Out to Others Together, or ROOT.

Washington, DC, resident Kenneth Barnes established ROOT after his son was shot to death in 2001. According to its Web site, ROOT is "committed to advocacy, education, and intervention on behalf of individuals and families who have been victimized by homicides. Its mission is to bring visibility and focus community and organizational resources on these homicides on behalf of families, while addressing the root causes of the systemic apathy that fosters a culture of violence in our communities today."

Among other things, Kenneth Barnes and other ROOT members work with the DC police and local and national organizations to help address the needs of families who have been affected by gun violence and homicide. ROOT also works with community organizations to develop violence prevention strategies and better coordinate their efforts.

ROOT's Guns Aside campaign began in September 2004 as a multimedia outreach program targeted at young people. As part of the campaign, ROOT members have visited schools and held

workshops and mentoring programs while working to build cooperative relationships with law enforcement personnel, businesses, and local government officials. Kenneth Barnes and ROOT recently announced plans to expand the Guns Aside program to the top 15 cities affected by gun violence around the country.

Ironically, September 29, 2004 marked not only the start of the Guns Aside campaign, but also the passage of the misnamed "District of Columbia Personal Protection Act" by the House of Representatives. Among other things, that legislation would repeal local laws in Washington, D.C. that ban the sale and possession of unregistered firearms, require firearm registration, impose common sense safe storage requirements, and ban semiautomatic weapons.

The Senate did not make the mistake of passing that legislation during the 108th Congress. However, the bill was reintroduced last year and the National Rifle Association has labeled it a "top legislative priority" for this year.

I hope that the House and Senate Republican Congressional leadership will reward the work of organizations like ROOT and reject the efforts of NRA lobbyists. We should respect the will of the people of Washington, DC, with regard to local gun safety laws and work to support the efforts of antigun violence organizations around the country by passing commonsense gun safety legislation.

ADDITIONAL STATEMENTS

TRIBUTE TO DAVE SERFLING

• Mr. DAYTON. Mr. President, I rise today to commemorate Dave Serfling, a Minnesota farmer, father, friend, and activist who died tragically on January 8 while driving home from church. My thoughts and prayers go out to Dave's family, especially his wife Diane, his daughter Hannah, and his son Ethan. Along with Dave's immediate family, the family farming and sustainable agriculture community in Minnesota also experienced a great loss on that Sunday morning.

Dave raised hogs, beef cattle, sheep, and crops on 350 acres in southeast Minnesota's Fillmore County. During his 46 years, he made extraordinary contributions to sustainable agriculture. As a key member of the Land Stewardship Project's Federal Farm Policy Committee, Dave Serfling put his farming experience and analytical skills to work in developing a new farm program that would reward farmers for their environmental improvements to their farmlands. His ideas were championed by the great Senator from Iowa, Mr. HARKIN, who was then chairman of the Senate Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry. They became the genesis of Senator HARKIN's Conservation Security Act, which is now a

lasting legacy to Dave as an important nationwide agriculture program.

Dave testified before the Senate for policies helping family farmers in Minnesota and across the Nation. His statement to the Senate Agriculture Committee on July 31, 2001, typified his philosophy on farm policy and farming itself: "I am a big believer in farm ingenuity. . . . Please don't tell the farmers how to farm. Just tell us what results you want to see on working land, give us meaningful financial incentives, and we American farmers will not let you down."

Dave's involvement with the 2002 farm bill was just one example of his contributions to sustainable agriculture and family farming. In 1987, he and his wife Diane were one of the original farm families to be involved in the Land Stewardship Project's Stewardship Farming Program, an on-farm research and information exchange initiative, which became a national model for farmer-to-farmer education. The Serflings continued to be involved in on-farm research and education during the past two decades.

Throughout the years, Dave wrote extensively for various publications, including the Minneapolis-based Star Tribune and AgriNews. His writings and speeches combined Dave's razor-sharp analytical abilities with his own family's experiences as stewards of their Fillmore County farm. The Serfling farm had also been featured in the Christian Science Monitor, the Des Moines Register, the Chicago Tribune, and on National Public Radio.

In recent years, Dave and Diane's farm has been recognized for protecting the environment and raising animals humanely, while also making a profit. In 2005, Dave and Diane were given an Outstanding Conservationist award by the Minnesota Association of Soil and Water Conservation Districts. That same year, their farm was recognized by the national company, Niman Ranch, as a top producer of high-quality pork.

Dave was also a role model for his children when it came to the idea of lifelong learning. In December 2005, he received a master's degree in professional agriculture from Iowa State University after taking classes, one at a time, for 16 years.

At the time of his death, Dave was working on new ideas for the 2007 farm bill. He was helping develop a new farm initiative for conservation, commodity program reform, and rural development based on local food and farming systems.

Dave had his priorities right. He loved his family, he cared for his farm, and he worked for the betterment of his community and society. He lived his faith. Dave Serfling's absence from farming, farm policy, and Minnesota will be felt for a long time to come. However, he has left a legacy of stewardship of the land and a practical vision for family farming that will benefit today's farmers and future generations. Thank you, Dave. Rest in peace. ●

MESSAGES FROM THE PRESIDENT

Messages from the President of the United States were communicated to the Senate by Ms. Evans, one of his secretaries.

EXECUTIVE MESSAGES REFERRED

As in executive session the Presiding Officer laid before the Senate messages from the President of the United States submitting sundry nominations which were referred to the appropriate committees.

(The nominations received today are printed at the end of the Senate proceedings.)

MEASURES READ THE FIRST TIME

The following bills were read the first time:

S. 2271. A bill to clarify that individuals who receive FISA orders can challenge non-disclosure requirements, that individuals who receive national security letters are not required to disclose the name of their attorney, that libraries are not wire or electronic communication service providers unless they provide specific services, and for other purposes.

S. 2273. A bill to make available funds included in the Deficit Reduction Act of 2005 for the Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Act of 1981 program for fiscal year 2006, and for other purposes.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS AND JOINT RESOLUTIONS

The following bills and joint resolutions were introduced, read the first and second times by unanimous consent, and referred as indicated:

By Mr. SUNUNU (for himself, Mr. CRAIG, Ms. MURKOWSKI, and Mr. HAGEL):

S. 2271. A bill to clarify that individuals who receive FISA orders can challenge non-disclosure requirements, that individuals who receive national security letters are not required to disclose the name of their attorney, that libraries are not wire or electronic communication service providers unless they provide specific services, and for other purposes; read the first time.

By Mr. COLEMAN (for himself and Mr. JOHNSON):

S. 2272. A bill to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to increase the deduction for host families of foreign exchange and other students from \$50 per month to \$200 per month; to the Committee on Finance.

By Ms. SNOWE (for herself, Mr. COLEMAN, Ms. COLLINS, Mr. DEWINE, Mr. GRASSLEY, Mr. SMITH, Mr. THUNE, Mr. SANTORUM, and Mr. JEFFORDS):

S. 2273. A bill to make available funds included in the Deficit Reduction Act of 2005 for the Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Act of 1981 program for fiscal year 2006, and for other purposes; read the first time.

By Mr. DOMENICI:

S. 2274. A bill to establish a language arts facility for Homeland Security personnel and law enforcement officers; to the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs.

By Mr. SHELBY:

S. 2275. A bill to temporarily increase the borrowing authority of the Federal Emergency Management Agency for carrying out